



# Bible Reading Notes

December 2019 – Micah

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*These notes are easy to install on most phones or tablets.*

*Install the 'PrayerMate' App and you'll find it under 'subscribe to online feeds' and 'Devotional'. It's called St Philemon's Bible Notes. If you have any problems, email [alicecornes@gmail.com](mailto:alicecornes@gmail.com)*

### How to use these Bible reading notes

These Bible reading notes are a resource to help you dig into God's word and allow it to change your life. 'A little and often' is a good motto. If you miss a day (or several!), don't feel guilty or try to catch up; just pick up wherever the notes have got to. Here's a guide to get the most out of these notes:

1. Find a time and place where you can be quiet but awake.
2. Ask God to help you understand.
3. Use the notes to help you think about the passage:
  - *'Read' sections get you thinking for yourself about the verses.*
  - *'Apply' sections suggest how they make a difference to you and how to pray in response.*
  - *Since it's December, Christmas carol lyrics have sometimes been included to help us reflect.*
4. Pray about what you have read.
5. Look for an opportunity to share with someone what God has told you.

## Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> December

At carol services, we often enjoy Micah 5. This Advent and Christmas we're going to feast on the whole of Micah. God will stretch how we think of him.

Read Micah 1:1-2

- How does Micah introduce his book?
- What background details does he give us?
- What's the scale of the command in verse 2?
- What do we think is coming next?

*The kings here ruled God's people before they were captured by the Babylonians (you can read more about them in 2 Kings 15-18). Samaria is the capital of Israel; Jerusalem of Judah.*

Apply

- Do you think it's kind of the LORD to reveal his word? Why?
- What would it look like to 'listen' as we study Micah?
- What might tempt us not to listen, or make it difficult to?

Pray

- Why not pray that this month God helps us to listen to who he is amid the 'fluff' of Christmas.

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> December

Micah is writing to help us think about how God fits together judgment and salvation.

- How would most people today describe God?

Read Micah 1:2-5

- What pictures are used to describe the LORD's coming in v.3-4?
- Try to visualise these pictures. What impression do they give of the LORD and his coming?
- Why is the Lord coming to judge (v.5)?  
*'Transgression' means rebellion. 'High places' are places of idol worship.*

In Micah 3:11 the leaders of God's people are saying: "Is not the LORD among us? No disaster will come upon us."

- But, in 1:5, who is the LORD coming to judge?
- How shocking would that be for Micah's first hearers?

Apply

- How do we feel about the God in these verses?
- How does this God compare with our usual view of him?
- What is the danger of being complacent in our walk with God?
- How does that challenge you personally?

## Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December

- What kind of God would your friends say you believe in?

Micah is teaching that God must punish sin before he saves.

Read Micah 1:6-9

- What will God 'therefore' do to Samaria because of her idolatry (v.6-7)?
- Try to picture some of this imagery.
- How does Micah feel about the plight of God's people? (v.8)
- Looking at verse 9, why does he feel such anguish? Is any cure available?

Apply

- Is this God who destroys compatible with the God we believe in?
- Would our friends agree?

At the cross, Jesus sorrowfully and willingly took God's right anger at sin on himself (Mark 14:34-36).

- If we miss out, or minimise, God as judge, what does God's good news lose?
- How does this impact how we speak of God to others?

Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> December

Micah is agonising over God's people facing judgment because of their sin.

Read Micah 1:10-16

*The footnotes are helpful for this passage.*

There are lots of details in these verses, but let's focus on the overall impression they create.

- How does Micah express his anguish over the coming judgment?
- The place names are of small towns near Jerusalem (Zion). What is the effect of Micah naming them and using wordplay? *(To help, imagine reading judgment coming to places near to where you live.)*
- What response does Micah want from God's people (v.16)?

Apply

We are closer to the position of those Micah mourns over than being a prophet like Micah. But we can still learn from Micah's reaction.

- How we usually react to people in the church turning their backs on God, for example, rejecting the Bible's teaching on marriage?
- How does Micah challenge our reaction?
- Why not spend some time bringing the state of the church before the LORD.

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December

Today Micah helps us see in greater detail why God is going to judge his people.

Read Micah 2:1-5

- How does v.1-2 shed light on how God's people are sinning?
- How do you feel about them?
- What 'therefore' will be the consequence (v.3-5)?
- How does the punishment fit the crime? (Look for similarities between v.1-2 and v.3-5)

Apply

- Are we glad that God fairly judges the sin from verses 1-2?
- How does seeing God's view on coveting - wanting something that isn't yours - challenge us?

In Advent, we look forward to Jesus' return to judge. Yet, many in the church today are reluctant to speak of judgment, even when speaking against evil behaviour.

- What solutions to injustice do people, including Christians, tend to give? What about us?
- Why is judgment a better message in the face of evil? Do we believe this?

## Friday 6th December

So far, Micah's been showing us that the LORD is right to judge his people for their evil.

- How are preachers of judgment received today?

Read Micah 2:6-7a

- What do the other prophets of Micah's day make of Micah's message of judgment?
- Why don't they want him to prophesy?
- What is their God like? How do they view themselves?
- Why is their message tempting?

Apply

- In what ways do preachers today behave like the prophets back then?
  - What do they say that God *isn't* like?
  - What do they edit out?
- How does it help us to know that not everyone who teaches about God, even if they use the Bible, really knows what God is like?



## Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December

Yesterday we saw that the other prophets want Micah to stop preaching that judgment is coming.

Read Micah 2:6-11

- In verse 7b, is Micah wrong to be prophesying about judgment? Why?
- Are God's people behaving uprightly? (v 8-9)?
- Is their prophets' v.6 assessment that "disgrace will not overtake us" correct (v.10)?
- In verse 11, what does it mean that a preacher of 'wine and beer' is 'just the prophet for this people'?

Apply

Sadly, people and preachers today aren't so different from Micah's day.

- What message do people today by-and-large want to hear from the church?
- Why does it matter if a preacher only talks about the comfortable things of Christianity?
- What would it look like to pay more attention to the true God?
- If a preacher you listen to never or rarely says anything negative, what alarm bells does Micah want to ring?

## Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December

Micah's teaching us that God must punish evil before he rescues, despite what others are teaching.

Read Micah 2:12-13

*The 'remnant' means God's remaining faithful people.*

- What's the tone of v.12? What will the LORD do?
- How does the picture change in v.13?
- Given what we've seen so far in Micah, how surprising are these verses? Why?
- How is v.12-13 different to the false prophets' message of "disgrace will not overtake us"?

Apply

God's faithful people today are looking forward to the second coming of this King to complete this work.

- How do these verses build our hope for the future?
- How confident can we be in it?

Pray

- Why not spend some time praising God for this wonderful salvation, and praying for King Jesus to return.

*Come, thou long expected Jesus,  
Born to set thy people free.*

*(Charles Wesley, 1707-1788)*

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> December

Today we start a new section. Micah's also moved forward in time. Micah first preached ch.3 when Hezekiah was King (Jeremiah 26:16-19). That means Micah 1:6 has happened: Samaria has now been destroyed. Only Judah is left as God's people.

Read Micah 3:1-4

- Who is Micah addressing in these verses?
- In v.2-3, how does Micah gruesomely paint their injustice?
- How will God treat those who reject him (v.4)?

Apply

- How do we feel about the rulers in Jerusalem and the judgment planned for them?
- What message do the mistreated today usually hear, or see, from churches?
- Why is Micah's calling out of sin and judgment a better message?
- If you are being mistreated, how does God feel about how you're being treated? What could be a next step in trusting God with your pain?

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> December

God is a God who must judge – even his leaders.

Read Micah 3:5-7

- In verse 5, how have the prophets been leading people astray? What determines what kind of message someone gets from these prophets?
- How will God judge them (v.6-7)?
- How is it a fitting punishment?

Apply

- What do preachers today stand to gain or lose, depending on what they preach? (For example, from the media, their denomination, or church.)
- How does it help us to know that leaders can, in effect, be bribed?

Sometimes we keep quiet in evangelism because we don't know what to say. But could bribery also be going on?

- What do we stand to lose to gain or lose from friends, colleagues, the people at the benefits office/job centre/council etc. depending on what we speak to them about?
- Does that ever cause us to edit our message, or to keep silent? What kind of God would your friends say you believe in?
- In light of this, spend some time saying sorry to God and asking him for mercy.

Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> December

Yesterday we looked at God's judgment on prophets lining their own stomachs.

Read Micah 3:5-8

- In v.8, how does Micah compare to the prophets of v.5-7?
- What is Micah's Spirit-filled job?

Apply

- What do we usually associate with someone being a 'Spirit-filled' preacher?
- How does verse 8 challenge, or shape, this definition?
- How does that influence who we choose to listen to teaching from?
- What questions can we ask to work out if we should listen to someone?

Pray

- Pray verse 8 for your church leaders.
- Pray for us to be able to discern who to listen to, and to be willing to listen to those who preach about sin, even when it's uncomfortable.

## Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December

Micah is teaching that God will judge before he will save.

Read Micah 3:9-12

- How does Micah sum up what the leaders of God's people are like (v.9-11)?
- What determines what message someone receives (v.11)?
- How do they view God? How do they think God views them? (v.11-12)
- Are they correct?

Apply

- How is the God revealed in Micah bigger and better than the view of God held by these rulers?

Leaders in the church can still behave like they did in Micah's day.

- How does it help us to know that not everyone who claims the LORD's support actually has it?
- If you are in any sort of leadership within a church, how does Micah encourage you to examine yourself?
- Pray for the wider church, that leaders denying judgment would turn back to God (like King Hezekiah did after hearing Micah preaching – you can read about it in Jeremiah 26.)

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December

Micah has been showing us that the LORD will judge Israel's bribed, complacent, leaders.

Read Micah 3:12-4:4

- What's the surprise of 4:1?
- How does the 'last days' picture of 4:1-4 answer chapter three's problem of Israel's wicked, unjust leaders?
- Does anything surprise you?
- What will life be like here?

Read Micah 4:5

- How does the vision of verses 1-4 encourage the faithful to walk the Lord's way now and forever?

Apply

This future still lies ahead! Spend some time rereading 4:1-5, imagining what this life will be like.

- How will life then be different to life now? Try to think of concrete examples.
- How can this future hope help us walk God's way when life is hard today? Try to get specific.
- How does this vision encourage us to proclaim God's salvation to the world around us?

## Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> December

Yesterday we saw the surprising picture of hope that will reverse judgment. Today that picture of future hope continues.

- What might Micah's first hearers worry about God as they get taken captive into exile?

Read Micah 4:6-8

- What's the tone of these verses?
- How are God's people described?
- What will the LORD do?
- How much certainty is there for God's remaining faithful people?

Apply

Micah's first hearers were awaiting exile. Christians too are exiles (1 Peter 2:11); we are away from home.

- Do we ever worry that God might forget about us, or get fed up with us?
- How does this passage reassure us about what God is like and what the future holds?
- As we wait for 'that day', why not pray, or sing:

*O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.*

*(Unknown)*



## Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December

Micah is showing us that God's rescue comes through judgment.

Read Micah 4:9-10

*'Now' here refers to a future situation for Micah's Jerusalem.*

- What will life be like for God's people (Daughter Zion)?
- Why do you think Micah uses the imagery of a 'woman in labour'?
- How would verse 10 surprise Micah's hearers?
- How would this passage help God's people as they suffer exile to Babylon?

Apply

- How would you describe God's character from these verses? Is he more about salvation or judgment?

1 Peter 2:11 calls Christians 'exiles'; in this life we are away from home, waiting to be taken home by Jesus.

- How does this passage encourage us to keep trusting God in the hardship of life?
- How does it help us to have right expectations for life now?

## Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December

Micah is helping us to trust who God is, in the midst of the hardship of life.

Read Micah 4:11-13

*'Now' here refers to a future situation for Micah's Jerusalem.*

- In verse 11, how will the nations treat God's people (Zion) as they get taken into exile?
- Why don't God's people need to fear their gloating (v.12)?
- How will God vindicate his people (v.13)?

Apply

- In what ways does the world (the media, our friends, etc.) act like it has the upper hand over Christians today?
- What do you particularly find hard about that?
- In the midst of this, how do these verses help us to trust God?
- What might this trust look like next time you're finding the world's gloating hard?

## Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> December

As Micah helps the faithful to trust who God is, today we head to the little town of Bethlehem.

Read Micah 5:1

God previously promised that his people would have a king from David's line ruling forever (2 Samuel 7).

- But what distressing situation is described in v.1?
- What would God's people fear?

Read Micah 5:2

- Who is promised, in verse 2? Where will he come from? Who is he *for*?
- How would Micah's hearers feel about the coming of this king?

Apply

The King has now come! In Matthew 2:6, the wise men quote Micah 5:2 and 4:

“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”

- How does today's passage help us to appreciate Jesus more?
- How is God's use of little Bethlehem encouraging when you feel insignificant?

## Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> December

Micah is painting a picture of the salvation that will follow judgment, now focusing on a coming king.

Read Micah 5:2-5a

- From verse 3, what will happen before the ruler of verse 2 comes?
- What will this ruler do (v.4-5a)?
- What will life be like under his rule (v.4-5)?
- How do these verses help Micah's hearers, facing enemy capture, not lose heart?

Apply

We live after the fulfilment of Jesus' Bethlehem-birth (v.2), but are still waiting for King Jesus' rule (v.4-5).

- What tempts us to lose heart in God's rescue? How do these verses help?
- Spend some time imagining a life of lasting security and peace under King Jesus' rule.

*For lo! the days are hastening on,  
By prophets seen of old,  
When with the ever circling years  
Shall come the time foretold,  
When the new heaven and earth shall own  
The Prince of Peace, their King,  
And the whole world send back the song  
Which now the angels sing.*

*(Edmund Hamilton Sears, 1810-1876)*

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> December

Micah is focusing in on the salvation God's king will bring.

Read Micah 5:5-6

- What will God's king achieve in verse 5?
- How is this achieved? (*The Assyrians represent scary, threatening enemies.*)
- As the faithful know invasion is coming, how do these verses help them to keep trusting God?

Apply

Micah's hearers expected to be delivered from their fears when the Bethlehem-baby arrived. We, further on in the Bible story, know this will finally happen when King Jesus returns.

- Name one of your current worst fears.
- How will it feel to be delivered from it, forever?
- Preach to yourself that Jesus will deliver you from it forever when he returns, no matter what objection is thrown at you.
- How does this hope help you to look forward to Jesus' return?

*Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee tonight.*

*(Phillips Brooks, 1835-1893)*

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December

In his book, Micah is teaching God's people that judgment is coming, but then comes rescue.

Read Micah 5:7-9

- Who are the remnant – God's remaining faithful people - in the midst of (v.7-8)?
- What images does Micah use to describe what the remnant will be like?
- As Micah's hearers face enemy capture, how does this promise encourage them?

Apply

In this world, Christians are in the midst of people who, though they might not realise it, are enemies of God.

- If you wouldn't consider yourself a follower of Jesus, or aren't sure, what do you make of this future? What side of God do you want to be on?
- For those of us following Jesus, how do these verses help us listen to God in a world where we often feel surrounded by people who oppose us?
- Who does it spur you on to pray for and talk to about the God of Micah today? Pray for them now.

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> December

Micah is helping God's faithful people to keep listening to him in the face of exile.

Read Micah 5:10-15

- “In that day” when his king reigns, how will the LORD make his people pure (v.10-14)?
- What will he destroy? Why these things?
- What impact does the repetition of ‘I will’ have?
- How does verse 15 fit with the LORD making a faithful people in v.10-14?

Apply

- How does this passage show us what God is like?
- Why is it good that God will remove anything that might cause his people to turn away from him?
- How do you feel about him purifying you?
- How does this vision of the future impact our behaviour today?
- You might like to use these song words to pray:

*O holy child of Bethlehem,  
Descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin, and enter in;  
Be born to us today.*

*(Phillips Brooks, 1835-1893)*

## Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> December

So far, Micah has written two sections in which judgment is followed by hope. Today we start the final section, likely written after God saved Jerusalem from the Assyrians. Have God's people learned to listen?

Read Micah 6:1-2

- What's the familiar scene and command here?

Read Micah 6:3-5

God's people have a new issue: they feel like God is burdening them.

- How does the LORD defend himself (v.3-5)?

*'Redeemed' means rescued. Verses 4-5 refer to events in Israel's history, bringing them from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land (Gilgal), despite their sin.*

Apply

- In what ways do we act like God burdens us?

We have more to remember than Micah's did! E.g.:

'God has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.' (Colossians 1:13-14) Spend some time remembering and thanking God for his saving work, and saying sorry for how we have treated him as burdensome.



Monday 23<sup>th</sup> December

In this final section of Micah, the LORD is presenting his case against his people, first defending himself against being considered demanding.

Read Micah 6:6-8

- In verses 6-7, what questions are put into the mouth of the would-be-worshipper?
- What are God's people acting like God wants from them? What have they lost sight of?
- But what has God asked for (v.8)?
- Is this a wearying request?

Apply

- What do we today act like God wants from us?
- What does this reveal about how we view God?
- How is it freeing to know that God doesn't require frenzied activities but a faithful, humble life?
- How does that impact our priorities as we serve him?

*What can I give Him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;  
Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.*

*(Christina Rossetti, 1830-1894)*

## Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> December

Yesterday, Micah said God simply requires his people 'to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God'.

Read Micah 6:9-16

- How should God's people respond to the 'rod' of the Assyrian invasion in verse 9?
- But from v.10-12, 16, have they been listening to God by 'acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with their God' (v.8)? (*Omri & Ahab in v.16 were northern Israel's most corrupt kings.*)
- What will 'therefore' be the result (v.13-15, 17)?
- How does knowing that more judgment is coming help the faithful in Micah's time to keep listening to God?

Apply

While Micah was looking to further judgment, Romans 1:18-32 describes how we currently live in a world under God's judgment as we await Judgment Day.

- In what ways are we surprised when we experience futility and things going wrong in this world?
- How does it help and challenge us to remember that we live in a world under judgment before our future salvation comes?

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> December

Happy Christmas! Today isn't your classic Christmas passage, but let's pray the Lord shows us wonderful things in his word.

Read Micah 7:1-4

- How is Micah feeling about his nation? Why?
- What are people like, instead of godly (v.2-4)?
- What is the 'day God visits' like in verse 4?

Apply

Christmas can be a bittersweet or sad time for people.

- If that's how you're feeling, how could Micah help you bring your sadness to God?
- Or, how could he help you to draw alongside someone who's finding Christmas tough?

Today we remember a day of God's visiting the 'not upright', but this time God comes to save!

'Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.' (Luke 2:11)

- How does seeing our sinful state in Micah make us thankful for our Saviour's birth?

*Hail, thou ever-blessed morn!  
Hail, redemption's happy dawn!  
Sing through all Jerusalem,  
Christ is born in Bethlehem.*

*(Edward Caswall, 1814-1878)*

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> December

Micah is teaching that before rescue comes judgment, so that God's people keep waiting for him.

Read Micah 7:5-6

- How does Micah describe what relationships are like in his day?

Apply

In Matthew 10, Jesus quotes Micah 7:6:

'Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn

“a man against his father,  
a daughter against her mother,  
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law –  
a man's enemies will be the members of his  
own household.” (Mathew 10:34-36)

- What should we expect relationships to be like as we wait for God's salvation?
- How do you feel about that, especially amid the 'fluffy, peaceful' talk of Christmas?
- Christmas can be a hard time relationally; maybe it is for you. How could these verses be a comfort?

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> December

So far this chapter, Micah has been lamenting what God's people are like.

Read Micah 7:5-7

- How is verse 7 a breath of fresh air given the previous verses?
- What is Micah doing?
- How personal is Micah's hope?
- How confident is he?

Apply

Like Micah, we are waiting:

'Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.' (Hebrews 9:28)

- As we look at the world around us, how likely does Jesus' return seem?
- But why can we have even more confidence in our Saviour's coming than Micah?
- Think about your day ahead. What would it look like to be watching and waiting for the LORD today?

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> December

Micah is helping God's people to know what waiting for God looks like.

Read Micah 7:8-10

*Wrath means God's right anger.*

- Why shouldn't Micah's enemies gloat over him?
- What is Micah's current state (v8-9)?
- Does Micah think he deserves it (v.9)?
- Where does Micah's hope lie (v.8-9)?
- How will the situation be reversed? (v.8-10)

Apply

- Given the evil Micah's described in his book, is it surprising that he considers himself also a sinner?
- What has Micah understood about who God is and what he deserves from God?
- How do we find being honest with God about our sin, especially when we are surrounded by people 'worse' than us?

Micah didn't know how it was possible for the LORD to plead his cause. But we do! Jesus "himself bore our sins' in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness' (1 Peter 2:24).

- Spend some time confessing your sin to the LORD, before appreciating his forgiveness.
- If you haven't said sorry to God before, or for a while, what could a first step look like now?

## Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> December

Do you ever fear that one day the church will be wiped out? That's the situation Micah's hearers are in, as they hear of coming capture.

Read Micah 7:11-13

- What does the future look like for God's people?
- Do they need to fear being wiped out?

Read Micah 7:14-17

- How much confidence can God's people have in God achieving this future?
- Who will power lie with?

*Verse 15 refers to God's rescue of his people through 'wonders' like the plagues and in crossing the Red Sea.*

Apply

We are still looking forward to this future, when Jesus, our Shepherd, returns.

- How does Micah calm our fears about the future of the church?
- Pray with Micah for our Shepherd to come to shepherd his flock.

## Monday 30<sup>th</sup> December

Micah's name means 'who is like Yahweh?', and that's where he focuses at the end of his book that's been all about who God is.

Read Micah 7:18-20

- Who is God in these wonderful verses?
- How does Micah's backdrop of God as rightful judge make today verses even more astounding?

Apply

For today, let's simply reread these verses slowly, think about them, and spend time enjoying and praising God for who he is.

*Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,*

*Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!*

*Glory to God, glory in the highest:*

*O come, let us adore him,*

*O come, let us adore him,*

*O come, let us adore him,*

*Christ the Lord.*

*(John Francis Wage, 1711-1786)*



Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> December

Micah has been telling us who the LORD is. He is a God who must judge sin – but afterwards, he will save.

Read Micah 7:18-20

- What images does Micah use to describe how God deals with our sin? Try to picture and feel them.
- How much confidence can we have in the LORD's salvation?

*(Verse 20 refers to the promises made by God in the book of Genesis to form a people and be their God.)*

Apply

Micah did not know how it was possible for God to pardon – to bear – sin. But we do! Jesus 'bore our sins upon the tree' (1 Peter 2:24).

- From today and the book as a whole, how has Micah helped us to know and love God more?
- How has Micah helped us to keep listening to God amid the hardship of exile-life in this world?
- What do you want to take into 2020 about who the LORD is from Micah? Why not share that with a friend from church.