

6-16-24 The Book of Judges

Judges 17:1–6; 19:1–21:25.

Topics: Relativism, Worship, Truth

Big Idea of the Message: A society without truth results in an environment of ignorance, hatred, and violence.

Application Point: Does your life reflect the integrity that comes from adhering to God's unchanging principles, or does it reflect the chaos that comes from relativism?

The last five chapters in the book of Judges are dark. There isn't a Judge mentioned. Many scholars believe that they aren't necessarily in chronological order. They aren't the easiest to read. The people in these books are all over the place. There is lying, stealing, cheating, selfish ambitions, sexual immorality, shocking inhumanity, and selfish indulgences. I would say the last five books grow darker and darker. They quickly move from an R rating to a TVMA within three chapters.

Chapter 19 is the hardest for me personally, with the results of it pouring out in **chapters 20-21** where we see civil war in Israel.

But as much as I don't enjoy reading them, I am reminded that they are part of the inspired Word of God, and all scripture is profitable. This reminds me of a teaching I heard one time regarding a compass.

Do you know where North is? (without using your phone or watches) Which direction is North? How can you tell?

- If we are not sure, can we decide where North is?
- Can we all just agree to pick one direction and call it North?
- Can we change it? Who has the final say on this? Nobody.
- The compass has the final say. It's the reality we are put in. There is only ONE North.

Many things in life are given. They are truths revealed to us, from creation and from the Creator.

- They are there NOT because we make them out to be, they are there because God designs them to be.
- We don't create science; we discover science. We can study it, analyze it, test it, understand it, but we cannot change it.

Likewise, God exists, and He is involved in our lives. He is not a creation of our minds or our hands.

- The truth about God comes through revelations – from His Word (through inspired men and prophets) and from Jesus Christ, the God-incarnate (the clearest revelation of Himself).
- We are called to discover Him, to know Him and worship Him. When we find Him, we will find life – its meaning and purpose.

Life cannot be complete without God. We cannot live life without a reference to God. He is the compass for life.

- This was what happened to the people of Israel living in the times of the Judges.

- They've lost their compass. They've lost their reference point.

This conclusion can be separated into TWO parts - **Judges 17-18 and Judges 19-21**. The author wants us to see these TWO big pictures:

1. They've lost their bearing. They have broken their relationship with God, and they are not aware of it.
2. Israel lost the meaning and purpose of life (**Judges 19-21**). NO MAP.

They don't know what they are living for. The last few chapters are "senseless". This is what life is like without a compass.

Look what **Judges 17:6** says. Look how the book ends, **Judges 21:25**.

Israel has degenerated to the point where they can make their own gods and install their own priests. Both apostasy and idolatry rolled into one. And they do not know how LOST they were. They presume that God was with them, and life goes on as usual.

The truth is, we don't always know we are lost. It takes some time. We can be deluded by false beliefs and not realize it. My prayer is that we realize it before we find ourselves like Micah, his mother, the Levite priest (Jonathan), the tribe of Dan, or a certain Levite, the Levite's concubine, the old man, or the evil men.

Look at the situation here. We are introduced to a man named Micah. God has established three institutions, the home, the church, and government. What we see in **Judges 17-21** is when all three are broken and what the results will be.

I. **Brokenness in the family.**

- The very first thing Satan attacked was the unity of the family. Man's relationship between him (man) and God and the relationship between man and woman.
- **Read Judges 17:1-5.**
- Micha's mother was rich. Someone stole eleven hundred shekels of silver (over 10,000 American monies today) from her. That's a lot of money. She cursed the thief, not knowing that it was her own son who stole from her. The curse was severe enough to scare her son into confessing. He confessed but what followed wasn't a reprimand or the offer of a guilt offering before God. Her response was: "**May you be blessed by the LORD, my son!**" (17:2) She did not correct her son or set things right.
- She then decides to consecrate her silver to the Lord. How? By asking Micah to make a carved image and idol out of it. In one breath, she consecrates to God and makes an idol. She pays lip service to God and sin against God at the same time. This is outrageous but true. And she was oblivious to the irony of it all.
- **Verse 5** tells us that the carved image, together with the ephod and other idols, were all placed in a shrine in Micah's house. Then he appointed his son to become a priest. He didn't qualify, and it wasn't God's way. It is absolute confusion spiritually, and they think they are serving God.
- So, in this family we have coveting, stealing, cursing, dishonoring of parents, idolatry, and God knows what else. They are morally bankrupt. But if you would have gone to them and

confronted them about all of this they would say, "That's your opinion, but this is the way we want to do it." Read **Judges 17:6**.

- Is this our world today? Are these American (Christian) homes in 2024?
- Do we know what God desires? Do we know that whatever takes precedence in our life over God is Idolatry?
- Have we rejected the absolute Bible authority and truth, standards, and morality? Many of us will say amen, that is how the world is but not us.
- But I wonder, is that right? I am often shocked at the lack of Bible conviction infiltrating many families in good Bible churches.
- Parents are losing their kids because WE are not the examples we need to be. We want them to obey but they see us going our own way personally. Our inconsistencies will be magnified in our kids, just as Micah's mother's issues were magnified in his life. And what we allow in moderation our kids abuse in excess!
- The power of Jesus can break the strongholds that have been built in our homes, but WE must be willing to surrender. We must seek the Holy Ghost to remove the blind folds that we have placed over our eyes that have blinded us.
- I had to ask myself, Cecil is your home any different than Micah's home.
- Are there compromises? If so, would you be willing to take it back for God? Or will you continue to keep going along to get along. Believing THE lie, if we just pray more and not make any changes (confess and confront) God will fix it.
- God is interested in parents willing to stand up and tell His stories, His statues, and live them. And stand on them. "As for me in my house we will serve the Lord."
- It isn't too late. With God all things are possible. If we are willing to confess and surrender, God will forgive and make the path forward clear. But make no mistake, it will be hard work!
- Building a home where God is the center of it is where the rubber meets the road. Everything starts in the home. If we won't make the changes there, we won't establish them in the church.

II. **Brokenness in the pulpits.**

- **Read Judges 17:7-13.**
- Next came a young Levite in **17:7**. We get to know his name in **Judges 18:30**, it is Jonathan. He is said to be from Bethlehem, but left Bethlehem in search of some other place to stay.
- It's odd that he lives in Bethlehem because Bethlehem is not one of the 48 cities where Levites live.
- The people no longer worship the Lord in the Tabernacle. They are not making sacrifices and the support for the Levites breaks down. This explains why this young Levite is searching for a place to live. He is retrenched!
- He is now a "priest for hire" (**Judges 18:4**) and Micah offers to pay him and house him. We read later in **Judges 18:18-20** that he left Micah and followed the Danites.
- When this Levite came to work for Micah, listen to what he says (**Judges 17:13**): "**Now I know that the Lord will be good to me, since this Levite has become my priest.**"
- He was so deluded to think that God will bless him now because he has a REAL Levite living under his roof and serving the idols he made.

- Micah has become so comfortable with wrongs; they are now rights. What is wrong has now become right.
- Everything that we've read so far is blatantly wrong, in absolutely every way and yet it happened.
- It happened because the people have already lost their compass in life. They are confused. They do not know right from wrong.
- People, we are lost without God. There is no reference point. Everyone can do what they like.
- Can we do what we like? Creation doesn't do what they like, they follow the laws of nature, the laws of science. Man follows spiritual laws that God has set.
- This is what is happening to our world. There is no absolute truth. There is no absolute right or wrong. You decide what is good and right and fitting. You can even decide who god is, shape it in the way you want, and then worship it. I say IT because there is only ONE true God.
- He is not an UNKNOWN God; Paul tells the people of Athens in **Acts 17:24-28**.
- Bethel, hear me. We (you and me) must make sure that God's house is managed well. The preacher/elders/leaders need to be sold out for God! He must be a faith filled (mountain moving), Holy Ghost controlled, God fearing, Bible preaching, people loving, disciple making, truth telling, lie detecting, powered by humility, knowing that without the power of God alone in his life, he would be completely lost.
- What about you? I constantly pray and ask God, am I holding Bethel back? Is it me Lord?! What is it I must surrender?

III. **Brokenness in Society.**

- When the homes and the pulpits of God are broken, the results are a broken society.
- Micah's broken home led to a broken solution, that found a broken preacher, that resulted into Micah's possessions being stolen and taken by some of the tribe of Dan.
- Look at Micah's response when all his possessions were being taken from him (**Judges 18:24**).
- **"You have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest...Now what more do I have?"**
- The Danites rob Micah, with the compliancy of his priest and then they pillage and plunder the people of Laish (**Read verses 27-31**).
- In **Judges 19** there is a **"certain Levite"**, this one God leaves nameless. And when you think things couldn't be any darker, man's heart unbridled by God is revealed even more.
- This **"certain Levite"** has a concubine who cheats on him and leaves him. A concubine was a second-class wife, she was guaranteed only food, clothes and marital privileges; her children wouldn't be entitled to the family's inheritance. Sounds like a great relationship status.
- After four months, the Levite decides to go and win his wife back with his gift of words. He meets her father, who is one of the only bright spots we find in this story.
- In **verses 3-10a**, there is plenty of spiritual application.

- The concubine cheated on her husband; the relationship was not part of the original design. God's original design is for one man and one woman.
- The Levite chases after her after being separated for four months. Jesus did the same for us, we play the harlot to sin, and He did all the work to reconcile us.
- The father appears to have the godliest characteristics out of the bunch in this chapter. The father welcoming his daughter home after she had an affair demonstrates grace and mercy. She could have been shunned by her family. If there was a king in power, she could have been tried for adultery. The father welcomed the Levite into his home and being hospitable. The father did all he could to keep the Levite and his daughter staying at his house another day.
- From **verse 11-21**, the story grows darker and darker. It quickly turns into a Hollywood horror movie.
- All these chapters remind us of where we all are apart from God. We turn to idolatry, worshipping whatever we feel is right. Living contrary to God's ways and believe God is ok with our effort.

Conclusion

So WHERE IS NORTH? (Use phone to check)

There is only ONE North. There is only ONE true God. He not only points us to the truth, He, Himself is the truth.

- Read and study what He says. He is the way, the truth, and the life. There is no other. He is our reference point. We pray and talk to Him.
- Don't do what you LIKE, do what is RIGHT. Seek God!
- God is alive and He is actively involved in our lives. He sends us signals of His truths from His Word, information that we need to know, to navigate our ways through life. He speaks to guide and to direct.
- Our part, as the receiving end, is to maintain this unobstructed line of communication with Him. We read the Bible, and we listen to His Word.
- There are times we go under (going into an underpass) and we lose sense of Him for a moment.
- But when we come up, we recalibrate and get our bearings right again.
- He never ceases to speak and guide. Don't ignore Him. Obey His signals and you will get to where He wants you to go.

How is your relationship with God?

Is your line of communication open to Him?

Have you lost His signals?

We cannot live life without this compass.

