

{un}faithful - 8
Week of March 26, 2017
Bay Park Life Groups –Leader’s Guide

Samson left us with a dead judge and an incomplete rescue of the Israelites. Whereas the previous chapters have given us a broad glimpse into the sins of the Israelites, chapters 17-21 go further into detail on what life was like in Israel during those times. That’s why these final chapters barely mention God. In this week’s study we’re going to look closer at the first two chapters of the “appendix” of Judges.

1. If you had to sum up humans in one word, what would it be?

Read Judges 17:1-2

2. These two verses introduce us to Micah and his mother. What can we tell about their character from their actions?

Micah - It tells us he is neither a very bad nor a very good person. If he were thoroughly evil, he would not have returned the money. At the same time, it takes a remarkable amount of ingratitude, faithlessness, selfishness, and dishonesty to rob your own mother! And it seems probable that pangs of conscience were not what convinced him to return the money as much as the fear of the curse. In summary, we have a person of weak character and no principles. He is hollow—a man without inner substance.

Note: In ancient times, a “curse” was taken very seriously. A curse “was not a mere sound on the lips, but an agent sent forth . . . an active agent for hurt.” A biblical curse was just a declaration and prediction that breaking God’s law would bring destruction. But in the pagan world, a curse was a magical agent set loose to harm the accursed party. That this view was held by Micah’s family is reinforced by what his mother does in verse 2c. She blesses him, which is the opposite of a curse. In other words, she removes the curse, as he hoped.

Mother - On the one hand, she is very forgiving. She immediately showers him with blessing and compliments him as if he had just done her a generous deed. Yet it also gives us a glimpse of the reason Micah is the hollow, unprincipled chameleon he is. She so quickly pronounces the wound “healed” that there is no process for cleaning and removing the infection. Dropping the metaphor, she spares him the pain and process of repentance and reconciliation. Without such pain, there is no deterrence to such behavior in the future, no insight into his heart for the reasons and motivations for the theft, and no humbling or grace for change. A condemning and punishing parent hurts a child, but so does an excusing and “enabling” one.

Read Judges 17:3-13

3. Micah's mother promises all her money to God in verse 3 and then in the following verse she simply gives a portion and retains the majority for herself. How is this an important indicator of our spiritual condition?

The main thing this demonstrates is that Micah's mother does not really put God first or give him sovereignty over every part of her life. She says she is going to "consecrate" her entire sum to him (v. 3), but then only uses a fraction for worship, apparently keeping the rest for herself (v. 4). This is hypocrisy by biblical standards (see Acts 5:1-2) or pagan standards. Similarly, many people claim Jesus as their Lord when in actuality they only obey him in certain sectors of life, wish. This sometimes is pure hypocrisy, as when a person conducts a secret extramarital affair. But it is more typical to simply ignore the implications of the gospel for every area of life. In Galatians 2:14 Paul confronted Peter with the fact that he was allowing racist feelings and prejudices to control him in some areas of his life. Many professing Christians are completely un-Christian in the way they conduct their work life. They may be as shady or as ruthless as everyone else in their business. In short, we can "solemnly consecrate" our whole lives to God but only give him part.

More particularly, many Scripture passages teach that we will want to put all our money at God's disposal when our hearts are changed by grace (Matt. 6:21).

4. What is Micah's ultimate aim in all of this?

Verse 13 makes it clear that his goal is to get access to God so that He can be "good" to him (purely based on Micah's definition of what good is). He wants God to serve him.

Read Judges 18:1-31

5. In verses 11-26, what happens to Micah? What is so tragic about verse 24?

The Danite soldiers stand outside Micah's house while give of them take his shrine (verses 17-18); and they convince his priest to go with them (verse 19-21). When Micah challenges them, they threaten to kill him (verse 25) so he is forced to leave empty handed (verse 26).

Tragic – all of Micah's faith is in his self-made shrine. So the Danites have taken all he has – all he looked to and relied on to give him God's favor and blessing. "What else do I have?" Micah discovered that the god he had made for himself was nothing, and could be lost in a few moments. The tragedy is that he is a member of Israel, who should have known the God whose presence cannot be stolen, and whose blessing does not rely on possessions or rituals.

6. What is the Levite's career path (17:7-12, 18:18-21, 18:30-31)? What seems to be driving his decisions? What is tragic about the detail given about him in verse 30?

He begins as a wanderer, having left the place he was meant to serve in (17:7-8). He finds a job (17:10-12); then goes on to work for the whole tribe (18:18-21). He ends up running the religious activities of Dan, in their newly-conquered city (18:30-31).

Driving his decisions – self-promotion. He uses ministry to boost his own status, even when that means breaking God’s laws. We see this most clearly in 18:18-21. At first he protests at the stealing of Micah’s idols – it will leave him without a shrine (ie. A job). But when he is offered the promotion of leading Dan’s idol-worship, he is “glad” (verse 20) and leaves with them.

Tragic – he is “Jonathan son of Gershom, the son of Moses”. This man is related to one of the greatest Israelites, Moses. This goes to show how far they have fallen, a member of a respected Israelite now leading idol-worship.

7. Throughout this chapter we see Micah essentially trying to shape God to fit his life and religion, rather than allowing God to be the one to shape him. How are we tempted to do the same?
8. Thinking back on our time in Judges, what has been the most striking truth you have learned or been reminded of? What difference does that truth make in your love for Jesus and your obedience to God?