

{un}faithful – 9 (OPTIONAL)
Week of April 2, 2017
Bay Park Life Groups –Leader’s Guide

The first part of the appendix that was covered in last week’s study (chapters 17 and 18) introduced us to weak-willed, opportunistic, and unprincipled people trying to best one another. The second half of the appendix shows us the violent and repulsive side to humanity. Take care in reading it as a Life Group and may it remind you of our world’s need for Jesus.

Read Judges 19:1-30

1. How is the woman treated badly by:

- a. The Levite?

He has her as a concubine (verse 2) – a second class wife, a sex slave. When the men of Gibeah are outside his door, he “sent her outside to them” (verse 25) to be raped and murdered. He then “got up in the morning” (verse 27) – he was so unconcerned that he had gone to bed while she was being attacked. He would have continued on without her had he not found her in the doorway (verse 27). He speaks to her as to an animal (verse 28).

- b. Her father?

He “gladly welcomed” the Levite (verse 3), showing him hugely generous hospitality for five days. This is probably the case because he wants to avoid the disgrace of having a daughter who ran away from her (second class) marriage. We are never told that the woman agrees to go with the Levite – the implication is that the father sends her back.

- c. The host?

He is very kind to the Levite, welcoming him in (verses 16-20). But when the men outside demand to have sex with the Levite, he offers them his concubine – and his own daughter (verse 24).

- d. The group of Gibeonite men?

Their behaviour is truly “wicked” (verse 22), “vile” and “disgraceful” (verse 23).

Each of these groups treat women shamefully. They appear to see men as more valuable than women.

Read Judges 20:1-17

2. How is the Levite’s account an edited version of what really happened?

In verse 5, there are three key changes/omissions to his account:

- *He says “the men of Gibeah” suggesting it was all of them, rather than only “some of the wicked men” (19:22).*
- *He says they intended to kill him; in fact, they wanted to rape him (19:22)*
- *“They raped my concubine” – omits the fact that he sent her outside (19:25).*

The point is that while the men of Gibeah certainly are villains, overtly and horrifically sinful, so is the Levite. He looks and sounds much better/more moral when in fact he is not.

Read Judges 20:18-21:25

3. What evidence is there that bitterness and sinful anger are driving this conflict rather than a concern for justice?

First, we see that the Israelites put to death every single Benjamite—man, woman, child, and even animal (v. 48)! That goes far beyond the rule of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”! At the very most, justice would have demanded the execution of the hooligans of Gibeah, or just of the Benjamites who came out to fight. What justification was there for the slaughter of the whole Benjamite tribe? This is the work of bitterness. It always wants two eyes in payment for every eye lost. Second, we see that the Israelites made two “rash vows.” They swore not to let any Benjamite marry any Israelite daughter (21:7). They had also sworn to kill any Israelites who had not united with the rest of them against Benjamin (21:5). These promises were extreme and unwarranted, and the Israelites realized this when they began to cool off. In fact, the oath not to allow any Benjamite to have an Israelite wife created a huge problem. They realized that they had effectively exterminated an entire tribe, since only 600 male Benjamites had survived.

4. Bitterness tends to transform into vindictiveness. On a tribal or national level, it looks like Judges 20-21. On a personal level, it looks less extreme, but is still destructive. And the only way to avoid bitterness and resentment is to practice forgiveness. How do the following verses suggest we do this?

- a. Luke 17:3-6

By doing it – and expecting to do it repeatedly. Forgiveness is a decision - an act of will, rather than subject to our feelings. It is granted before it is felt.

- b. Matthew 18:21-35

Only the knowledge of our debt to God can put in perspective someone else’s debt to us. And only the knowledge that God has canceled our debt, in the costliest way possible, will enable us to cancel another’s debt to us. The forgiveness of Christ gives us the emotional humility to forgive and the emotional resources to forgive.

- c. Mark 11:25

We are to forgive when someone repents (ie. Seeks forgiveness from us and reconciliation with us) but here, we are told to forgive before trying to be reconciled to someone. If we wait for repentance, we may wait a long time; and that time is ample for bitterness to grow and strangle our ability to forgive.

5. How is Judges 21:25 a good summary both of the book, and of the central problem of humanity?

Judges is about how people – even God’s blessed people – live in the way that see fit. Time and again, we have seen the people doing what seems right to them, even though it is evil in the eyes of God. These last chapters have shown us, on a personal, tribal, and national level, the catastrophes this causes. So Judges is a book about how all people need saving, and ruling Israel “had no king” – no one to lead and rule them in obeying God. Humanity’s central problem is

that we live as we think best, and it leads to disaster – and that we live as though there is no King, rejecting the only way our society and hearts can be purged of evil.